

CHAPTER I ON MARRIAGE AND MORALS

The Americans found Thakur seated in the yard of Boral Bungalow with a group of people gathered around him. A small lantern beside the bench on which he sat spread a circle of light around them. The visitors took their seats and after informal introductions, one of them observed, "Thakur, science has given men the power over nature, but not the wisdom to use it properly. Nowadays, it is said that man must gain an equal development in moral strength, otherwise, he may be destroyed."

"I feel," Thakur began, "that whenever love dissolves all the ☒ Complexes in the Love, then loyalty to moral law is automatic. Yet, the loll of lust and passion dissipates love, staggers in dilemma and creates a chaotic, suicidal society where evil runs in progression."

"Just what is the difference between love and lust, Thakur?"

Thakur answered, "The *sine qua non* of love is, I think, the inclination to give. Its satisfaction is only in bestowing. It has no affinity with the dealer mentality of give and take. In it there are no expectations, no hope for return. Lust, on the other hand, is just the opposite. It is the inclination to get. It is 'wanton' (wanting in education, unled, unprincipled). Love reveals itself through admiration, service and offer of gratitude with every sincerity. Lust reveals itself through demand, deprivation and negligence with every lassitude. When love repels and lacks the zeal to suffer; when it cannot bear the cross of the beloved nor entertain him with progressive, profitable nurture; then, I believe, that love is doubtful, fictitious and not based on the being but on passion."

"But, Thakur, isn't passion primordial? It is a fundamental part of man's life. Even philosophy says that man is born with 'original sin'."

"No doubt," Thakur explained, "passion is provided by Providence . . .

but, in order to propagate existence in an uphill evolution of life. Its proper use through compatible marital match acts as toning food to the luster of conjugal life. Its excessive expression or unbalanced suppression brings a dullness and deterioration in body and brain. So I say to you: always be modest and honestly chaste and thus allow your craving to tone your existence and extend your marital go of life. Hence, being modest with normal restraint and off from its misuse, you shall have bliss in hearth and home and blessed children, too."

"Do you believe such restraint is possible, Thakur?"

"I believe, when passion sucks the sauce from life, then disintegration absorbs existence and fettered fate taunts with tears. But, when passion serves life passionately to make the adjustment of existence meaningful, then that propensity becomes soaked with love for existence in an active, serviceable ecstasy—your own and others too. Providence smiles and stretches His providing arms to embrace you. Then, such restraint is possible. So, can't you think of your beloved with wistful service and interest? Merely this will encourage your ability and repulse every contact that is foreign. Chastity will glow in your mind and dwell in your physique and a radiant reverence will resonate through each of your words and deeds. Then, with a thrilling caress of affection for life, you will be the emblem of nurture, hope and charity to your children and society!"

One of the young women shook her head. "There's one thing that seems unjust, Thakur. Society expects chastity in women, but overlooks the lack of it in men. Why is there always this double-standard?"

"Virtue in man is vital to existence no doubt," Thakur replied. "But, I understand that chastity is specially indicated in woman because she is the mother who conceives—the cradle of life, happiness and peace. It is she who initiates every flowing good from the paternal, existential wealth. It is

her discerning intelligence and affectionate goading that adjusts the children in good characteristics according to the essential resources of the father that dwell within. So, I understand that 'mother' means 'to measure', for she is the measure of the child's personality."

"Still, Thakur, your explanation of love gives little room for give and take. Don't you feel that constancy and dedication must be mutual? A wife can't go on serving and loving without any return in gratitude and love ..."

"... I feel," Thakur interrupted softly, "that selfish expectations are the pebbles in the jar of existence that resist its being filled with the wine of life. Though love is seldom mutual, yet, it has a magnetic pull. The holy weapons that can conquer my heart are love, compassion and service that well up and nurture your beloved's existence. It is such an apt and skilful go that can surely bind and beautify inseparably. So, I say: Always leave to your mate with an immortal, unbreakable tie and both of you be surrendered to your Lord with progressive, concentric service."

An Indian listener intervened, "Thakur, there's one problem when people surrender to their Lord. There are so many contradictory declarations on marriage relations. Christ believed in monogamy and not divorce. Moses and Mohammed advocated polygamy and divorce. And, there are Buddhists who believe in polyandry. All are different, and yet each feels that his way is the one that serves existence."

Thakur shook his head. "But I understand that each Lord is for life and growth. He is the watch of bread and imparts this to the people. All Prophets are the fulfilling Embodiments of the same in essence, according to the needs of the age. Hence, compatible, contented, virtuous monogamy with zealous, serving initiative that binds each other with complacent satisfaction in a psychophysical, sacramental wedding is the monumental virgin endowment of society that begets Godly tradition and raises many upwards...."

". . . but, Thakur," the youth intervened, "if all are the same in essence, why did Moses and Mohammed permit divorce and support polygamy?"

"Hazrat Rasool has said," Thakur explained, "of all the laws permitted to man, the most hated by Allah is the law of divorce. And, I think, that 'hated by Allah' means 'hated by existence' for it is against life and growth. Furthermore, Lord Christ has said, '. . . . Moses permitted divorce because of the hardness of your hearts, but from the beginning it was not so. . . .' I feel that hard-hearted means passionately hard-hearted."

"But what about polygamy, Thakur? That's practically the same thing." Thakur shook his head. "I think that the divorced and adulterous due to soaring shocks and unbalanced fickleness often beget cruel, hard-hearted offspring with passionate obsessions of diverse patterns. Whereas, I think that compatible, supra-selective polygamy is more encouraging, as it begets a variety of traits with superior intelligence." "What fs supra-selective polygamy?"

"Supra-selective polygamy was practised, I think, when Abraham, the Patriarch, married Hagar, the hand-maid, at Sarah's insistence. For when a woman of lesser tradition is united in sacred wed-lock with a man of a *greater* at his wife's insistence, then supra-selective polygamy is practiced, often to fulfill and exalt the needs of existence."

"But, Thakur," the young American woman protested, "it is said that Sarah ultimately became jealous of Hagar and even drove her away. I don't see how this exalted anybody's existence!"

"Thakur smiled softly. "But from Sarah's son, Jacob, came Christ the benevolent Blessing of Providence. From Hagar's son Ishmael, came Mohammed-the Servant of Survival. Did they not heighten the glow of Providence? Were they not the super-sonorous urge of Heaven?"

"Anyway, Thakur," another youth interrupted, "the legendary past is of

less concern than the immediate present. Today, civil law in almost every country, and canon law in many, recognizes 'monogamy and divorce'."

"Yet I feel," Thakur responded, "that virtuous, contented, compatible monogamy is always the bliss that heaven adores. For It ordains by norm and nurture the birth of progeny of greatness. Whereas, divorce is always a civil adjustment of beastly ballot giving legal sanction to debauchery with a fantastic chase of man and woman in a fickle, passionate crave. It indulges against the chaste go of life to create ill-fated progeny."

"Butl, Thakur, don't you feel there are times when divorce is required on grounds of ordinary humanity? When one of the partners is oppressed or neglected, the wife has no alternative but to seek divorce even though her love remains."

Thakur's eyes seemed to widen. "Have you ever seen in the scripture of love to fly away from beloved ? No, no, no! Blessed love never likes any contradictory action against the beloved, for love flows with every compassion: and what is more, it binds the beloved with a tie of immortal adherence!"

Thakur glanced at a young Indian high school student standing on the edge of the group and called, "What does Christ say about divorce?" The high school student^{*}, startled by this unexpected question and the apparent irrelevancy of it, shrugged his shoulders helplessly. A Bible appeared from one of the attendants who quickly leafed through the pages and began to read," He who divorces commits adultery and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery .. ."

*[* This apparently innocent and seemingly irrelevant query to the high school youth was typical of Thakur. More than 15 years later when this youth had become an intern in a hospital in Connecticut and was having such difficulties with his wife that they seriously contemplated divorce, it was this long forgotten warning that restored a balance and renewed dedication to the young doctor that*

saved his marriage. Today, a successful surgeon in the southern part of USA, a happy home and two brilliant sons has made the doctor understand the relevance of Thakur's query of so many years before.]

"Then you don't approve of divorce under any circumstances? Even when the life together is nothing but conflict and sorrow for themselves and their children?"

"Physical separation in extreme incompatibility with a repenting, self-controlled, patient forbearance and a scrutinizing search for solution may, as a last resort, relieve conflict and sorrow" Thakur observed. "Yet, I believe, divorce is ever an awful insult to humanity-especially to the progeny. It condemns one's heart to hardness and loosens the noble, sentimental greed for life, turning the people and the progeny uncharitable. It cherishes in the inner core of intelligence a filthy morale that scatters in the environment. So, I feel it is a sin, the satanic solution that deprives existence of good and Godliness and loses the prop of concentric zeal which lies in the bosom of nature!"

The American girl frowned. "Then, Thakur, well . . . well, what of those like us who are already divorced and our children do you feel we are doomed ?"

Hope radiated from Thakur's eyes. "To think 'all is determined' or any man is doomed is an outrage to terminate God the Infinite, the all-merciful Almighty. I understand that good and 'id do exist. The strong mind, aware of the bad, makes the good flourish. So, I think, that in any society where divorce rolls on, linking the marital relation unrighteous, and the mates unreliable props of life to each other in such cases, and particularly in the union of previously divorced couples ... if the dislike is to be dislocated, they should cleave together with love for Beloved the Lord, ever trying in the way of His love to chastise, mould, and appease each other with forbearance, sympathy and understanding, in happiness, sorrow and

suffering. Further, while noting the villainous tyranny of divorce, they should also teach their children to ignore it too—except in cases of shameful adultery. They should train their off-spring to select their mates with every righteous, careful observation and then be united in sacred, unbreakable wed-lock."

Thakur's voice became more compelling. "So I say again: Do resolve! Be not shaken! Be not detached . . . not divorced! Become the prop and pilot for life and becoming. Forbear and suffer for the welfare of each other with a coupled go of love for your Lord. And, being strict to ignore and abhor the divorce system in society with your heart, brain and soul, let your children enjoy their parents with every loving, evolving push. Surely, in making them blessed, you shall be blessed and all will joy the glimpse of heaven!"

After a few moments of silence, Thakur stood up in the flickering light of the lantern and suggested "Let us go over by tree." The group arose and followed him in the darkness.

CHAPTER II ON BIOLOGY AND BECOMING

When Thakur had taken his seat under the vine-encrusted banyan tree, one of the young American visitors observed, "You describe the possibilities of family life as 'a glimpse of heaven'. However, Thakur, in many families, even those without any history of divorce, the home is rather distant from the picture you describe. All parents in America seek happiness in marriage; they desire loyal, intelligent children who might bring credit to themselves and their family. Yet, often it seems that we have failed somewhere. The children are given the best education that money can provide health, opportunity . . . nothing has been left out. Yet, many times the children neither utilise those opportunities, nor do they develop in the way we hoped. On the other hand, it is found that children who have had much less opportunity do achieve and contribute far more to family and society. When I seek for a cause, I become confused. Then I end up either blaming fate or giving credit to luck."

Thakur nodded, "I say, don't ignore the law of begetting which requires that traditional flow of characteristics that contributes to life's becoming and transmits through the matching of similar heritage to sprout into hereditary specifications which generate finer feeling and instinct. If this is ignored, one commits a suicidal offence which gradually affects family, state and society with a mongrel manifestation. Then, a luring whistle of passionate dream infects every heart and home—educated or illiterate—with a dissipated, luxurious go."

"Perhaps that kind of degeneration is the fate of all civilizations, Thakur. In fact, one philosopher has suggested that civilization itself is a disease that is inevitably fatal."

Thakur shook his head. "No doubt, when civilization ignores

the eugenic, uphill evolution of existence, then non-virile intelligentsia, lacking valour, traditional traits and far-sightedness, and infected by injudicious unrestrained passion, often contaminate the majority of the people to roll down with vulgar steps. Then, I think, civilization is attacked with the disease that diminishes it to insignificance. But, if one protects his family and civilization through proper, compatible marital ties that nurture the various, distinctive genes so as to maintain an evolving efficiency, then, I say, hearts do upheave and civilization does soar in a growing expansion eternally."

"Thakur, that sounds all right," the young woman remarked, "but human eugenics flies in the face of a democratic way of life. Fundamental to democracy is the free choice of not only one's rulers, but also one's marriage partners—regardless of eugenic compatibility. This free choice is considered a basic premise in man's inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness."

"Yet, it is my belief," Thakur explained, "that incompatible marriage often makes the morale of morality lame and lurid. Family and society then sigh in the tussle of conscience and consequence. Whereas, stable, well-cleaved eugenic life that sprouts from the matching of bio-psychic compatible mates is truly the pursuit of happiness which shines with brilliance to beget progeny of talented glory surrendered at the feet of heaven. Is not this the fundamental of happiness in family, society and state?"

"Perhaps it is, Thakur," the woman agreed, "but what do you mean by bio-psychic compatibility? How can one recognize incompatibility?"

Thakur nodded. "I have seen that certain organic compounds fulfil specialities of others when combined, while some

combinations become unstable or malformed, their original qualities are lost due to electric maladjustment. Similarly, the individual characteristics, family traditions and traits of wife, if not fulfilling and nurturing to the husband, break the original system of the offsprings and make them repugnant to their ancestral culture, sentimentally peevish and stubbornly unbalanced. Whereas, proper bio-psycho matching makes the one another to beget mighty off-shoots of spontaneous, intuitive, educative traits."

The girl shook her head. "I still don't understand bio-psycho traits, Thakur. Everyone has literally millions of traits and even these vary at different ages and under different circumstances. The possible permutations and combinations are almost infinite and to judge which fit and don't fit is practically impossible."

"At least," Thakur observed sympathetically, "don't support or nurture the matching of a woman of ancient, noble, cultured gradation with a man of more recent one—however brilliant he may be. I believe such unions fuse in fragile frailty, disrupting the delicate characteristics of each and almost inevitably beget progeny that integrate in a devilish distortion who, in turn, drag society down to the boisterous hell of disintegration."

The white-haired, scholarly visitor smiled. "Havelock Ellis has remarked somewhere that Lady Chatterley would not have been a happy wife to her peasant lover. This observation seems to agree with your idea, Thakur. However, the problem remains: A democratic society cannot accept any class distinction or recognize superior or inferior. They feel it smacks of vanity and arrogance."

"I don't understand arrogance or vanity, but what I see I say. I

observe that each person is a unique empire of Providence, and to goad him from his normal trail of aptitude is to outrage the path of his instinctive existence. Thus, you lose an empire for yourself, your society and your state. Then, the echo of that lost existence comes back as suffering to rupture the roll of life with an indolent dullness. This is why I say: Don't declare or do what you do not like for yourself. Don't make another a loser and don't be a loser yourself by demolishing the definite, distinctive arrangement of existential evolution that draws us toward the draught of existential elixir."

The girl's forehead wrinkled. "But . . . but, Thakur . . . doesn't the definite arrangement of evolution stand upon the premise of equality? Don't you believe in equality?"

"I don't believe," Thakur explained, "that the conception of equality can create intelligence, because it seldom differentiates one from another. Often it creates a fantastic, foggy conception with a frivolous, dull exposition that dwindles the inter-interested go. But, I like the sense of equitability—the capacity to distinguish between similarity and sameness—that generates fellow-feeling and sympathy."

"But, Thakur, do differences make for fellow-feeling? Generally, it is just the opposite."

Thakur shook his head. "Just think: if all had been equal, then the feeling of 'I' as different from others would never exist. If there were no 'you' there could be no 'I'. That is why I feel that though the urge for existence is one, the process of existence is many. Hence, each unique existence can only acquire from another life entity a meaningful, piling adjustment of knowledge through his own distinctive aptitude."

"What on earth do you mean by 'distinctive aptitude'?"

"I understand," Thakur began, "that each being comes into this world with specific, instinctive characteristics handed down through generations—the immortal necklace of germ cells. It is through this individual distinctiveness that man's existence is upheld and through it he finds, and ultimately feels, the underlying unity in creation. In a word, he then reaps the harvest of existential proficiency. On the other hand, to break or belittle this trail of instinctive, normal aptitude through ignorant nurture or incompatible marriage is to make the inner man suffer in a passionate, slavish, suicidal trap. In a word, he reaps the harvest of hellish deterioration."

"Then, Thakur, you have to give more importance to one individual than another!"

Thakur shook his head emphatically. "But I believe that no man is less important than another in the field of his normal aptitude, be it philosophy, administering or farming. I understand that every aptitude is provided by Providence to further the fulfilment of existence. So I say: don't minimize the labour or skill of anyone, but keep open the way for each distinctive aptitude to maintain and evolve with active enthusiasm and determination. Thus, insure the evolving life of everyone—yourself, your neighbour, your society and state."

"Do you actually feel that's possible and still maintain the ideal of democracy, Thakur?"

Thakur said, "Just face the fact both analytically and synthetically with earnest inquisitiveness and wistful intellect. Seek for the common factor and nurturing mechanism in each and every existence. Thus, acquire and systematize a knowledge that includes all differences and similarities, actions and inter-actions. Surely, you will distinguish through graduated perception, the shining door where varieties and variations meet in the univer-

sal, all-wise entity. And even more, you shall embrace the goal of man: the Democracy that is Divine!"

The elderly scholar became thoughtful. "Thakur, a number of groups in various parts of the world have sought to find ways and means to apply eugenics to man. Few, if any, have had any success. Human eugenics, I'm afraid, is a field that at one time offered much promise, but has produced very little practically."

"Still," Thakur softly insisted, "it is my faith that though we fail a thousand times, yet when one favourable point that fulfils life's hankering to evolve is discovered, it allows thousands of individuals to gain. So, why worry or mutter of inability or unsuccess? Why not exercise and administer to gain that point even amidst the thousand failures that cry around you?"

The visitor smiled. "As a matter of fact, Thakur, a prominent contemporary physician in America has recently suggested that each individual maintains a record of the history of the diseases in his family as an aid to diagnosis and to the understanding of the place of heredity in diseases."

Thakur's head bobbed up and down in agreement. "Surely, if each and everyone maintained accurate genealogical records over generations with brief notes of specific characteristics, health and occupational history, it would help to lead to a solution."

"Still, Thakur . . ." the young woman's brow was puckered up, "this emphasis on heredity, on distinctiveness . . . somehow it just doesn't seem right. It places a kind of limitation on us as free children made in God's image. We might have limitations. But, to emphasize them. . . to . . . to insist upon them, denies democracy and even belittles our faith in God, don't you think?"

Thakur's voice was gentle. "I think that if one desires to go

beyond the limitations imposed by nature, he has no choice but to go through them. It's why I feel a man must stand upon those distinctive traits bestowed on him by heredity and nature. Then, through devoted adherence and sustained effort to fulfil his Lord, Who is the Fulfiller of each according to his characteristics, he eventually comes to realize the universal One. He extends that original line indefinitely—like a parabolic curve."

The wrinkles in the forehead of the girl seemed to soften as Thakur continued, "In our scriptures it is said a menial or a king can know Brahma, but not by discarding his instinctive traits, rather by standing on them. Such realized persons are true Brahmins and men have always worshipped them. This is why I feel each of us must stand upon our own distinctive characteristics, for only then can we keep the way to further evolution open. Only then we know no end to our possibilities. For as God is the source of unlimited energy, so is man if we maintain intact our link with the Source. For God did create man after His own image."

The girl had grown more thoughtful. "Still, Thakur, there's another problem. Who's to judge what the distinctiveness of a particular person is? And even more, how to know which distinctiveness of what man is compatible with which distinctiveness of what girl. . . well, it seems terribly complicated."

Thakur nodded and said, "I think that tabulated knowledge, scientific test, careful observation—the accumulated acumen that unfolds the matching point, who matches with whom producing what—will inevitably evolve accurate, existential standards. And when it is an experimented fact, everyone will follow, for do not all men seek their welfare?"

The young man who had been silently listening intervened: "Thakur, a western historian has observed that 300 generations

cover the history of Western civilization and ten generations suffice to create fundamental changes. Further, he has suggested that a single generation represents a critical moment of history" The youth glanced at his friends and then added, "I was just wondering just how long you feel it would take before noticeable results were achieved by introducing some of these eugenic considerations into marriages. Often, the fact that biological change is so slow and imperceptible, it fails to secure widespread support or sympathy."

Thakur became thoughtful. "I think," he said finally, "if a community or country follows the law of begetting continuously for six to eight generations with an active, alert and conscientious urge, then the government of Providence will grow normally, the morals of the people will be maintained spontaneously and the breeze of becoming will blow a fragrance of freedom and liberty to all."

"Six to eight generations!" The girl's eyes widened. "Why, that's practically two hundred years. That's too long, Thakur."

A trace of a smile played on Thakur's lips as he replied. "That's why I feel that now is the time to select and sow with care the seed of the tree that can bear the fruit which will flourish existence later. Then, it is sure, your future progeny will find that a glimpse of heaven on earth has appeared to them automatically. What is more, the heart of your posterity will flood with gratitude for your farsighted fulfilment of existence!"

"But, Thakur, this law of begetting. How to know where to start . . . how to begin?"

"Just teach your offspring when they select their mates to consider with a careful observation at least these aspects: compatible culture and conduct; health and hygienic go; hereditary

diseases, physical and mental; compatible educational and occupational efficiency."

"Thakur, that doesn't sound so bad," the girl's face seemed reassured.

"Merely this," Thakur continued, "I know, will begin to clear the way to make your society clean and chaste and permit Providence to provide progeny of compassionate intelligence, farsighted balance and with a wistful understanding of the profound in their traditional trail. And most of all, it will bestow the traits and treasures of Providence on your family, society and state."

Thakur leaned toward the Americans and there was naked appeal in his voice as he continued "Will you not do this? Can you not do this? You must do it, you must! It is but the altar of your becoming that will make your hearth and home the pride of all, and everyone's hearth and home a garland of your pride!"

Silence descended on the group and an attendant informed Thakur that it was time for his evening meal. As the group stood and watched him walk through the moonlight that sifted through the branches of the banyan tree, the dinner bell in the community kitchen sounded and the visitors thoughtfully turned toward it.

CHAPTER III

ON PROTESTANTISM: HERETIC OR HEAVENLY

The following day when Thakur was seated on the verandah of a tin-roofed building, the American visitors came and the serious, spectacled youth began. "Thakur, since last evening, we have been discussing about the Ecumenical movement in America. It is an effort to unite the Protestant churches. I have been active in it to some extent because many of us feel that people at home look to the Church in these trying times for new inspiration. Unfortunately, the sectarian quarrels often muffle the spirit of Christ and destroy much of the spiritual vitality of the Church. Attempts continue to achieve a practical unity around a common allegiance to Christ and some progress has been made. But it is so slow and tedious. Today, the gulf between the Christian brotherhood that Jesus envisioned and the superficial sympathy that many denominations profess for one another is considered by some to be the greatest single tragedy of our times. Do you feel there is anything that can speed up the process? What is it that blocks this almost universal desire for unity?"

Thakur grew thoughtful and then softly began. "I think that as men grow mutually interested through active service to the Lord, the necklace of pearls is threaded through. Sometimes, designing inferiority stands in the way. Perhaps there are those who seek to make the greater ones smaller out of desire to establish themselves in preference to work for the Lord: '... let the Church be unified through us or let it remain apart. ...' Those who think like this find fault without sympathy and many times mark time until some hindrance is created. In a word, those who lack any creative and constructive urge, make it difficult to bring about a crystallised condition amongst men. Those who are affected by the faults in others, who don't develop the urge to remove them, who don't dream to make integrated and creative that which is on the way

into cosmos; in whom the slightest opposition or obstruction creates depression and breaks the creative imagination; who lack the stubborn courage to hold fast to the rudder. . . such men cannot unite and consolidate others."

"But, Thakur," the youth paused and scratched his head, "how many people are there without at least some of these failings?"

"No matter how few there are. If they become untotteringly adhered to the Lord; if they make unity amongst themselves; if they enhance the curative urge to serve and sympathize constructively; if with that urge for unification, they watch with vulture-like eyes for those things which are against unity and skillfully and ardently strive to remove them by the roots. . . well, then all things will automatically take care of themselves. Frequently, man is so foolish he doesn't appreciate that he can have everything so easily if he is normally active and interested in the Lord. Instead he tries to satisfy his own selfish interest and establish himself at the cost of the Lord."

"But, Thakur," the young man shook his head, "I don't see what merely a few could possibly do. The effect of their activity on the huge and complicated problem would be insignificant."

"The effects may be seen today or after a hundred years. Each feels it when he becomes active. Then his brightness will shine through unconsciously according to his distinctiveness. One's eyes, movement, expression, behaviour. . . whatever is seen in Him is lodged in one's brain in toto. So, the more you work out His words with responsibility, the more that deposited wealth goads you forward. You'll be able to feel and enjoy each of His ways. . . the meaning, implied and expressed, will burst forth as you proceed on fulfilling Him for His sake. So I say to you:

Never compromise with the common interest. It is the remedy of misery. And know it for sure that untottering, dispassionate adherence to the Lord does adjust passion and prejudice toward His worship and welfare where unity will swell with an uplifting smile."

The American girl cleared her throat. "Thakur, I don't agree with him," she said pointing to her companion. "There are a lot of people who are attached or adhered to Christ. It just hasn't brought unity, that's all."

Thakur smiled and nodded. "Even when attachment to the Lord exists, people entertain certain superstitions which arise out of complexes. They become isolated in them. It is only when a passion-pervading attachment becomes steady that one can break out of that inbred bubble of complex. Only then can one make all other people one's own from the standpoint of the Lord. This is also true: that when a genuine attachment for the Beloved grows, then one can love and respect and maintain a harmony with the distinctive qualities of others while yet retaining one's own intact. No doubt, temperamental differences do exist. Invariably a person prefers those with similar temperament. But adherence to the Lord even expands one over this. It is for this reason, I think, that ordinary good people who lack the attachment also lack the sign of consolidation amongst themselves, though they do have some mutual understanding."

"That's interesting, Thakur, but the intensity you speak about ignores the innate selfishness in most of us."

Thakur shook his head. "Though those who have an intense desire for self-establishment and selfish enjoyment seldom are able to attain a unity; yet, the slightest attachment for the centre of union—the all-fulfilling Lord—does drag people together. For through this mutual association, each one's inclination, passion,

nature, interest, superstition and desire are knocked. Men feel pain. But because all are tied primarily to that one Centre, nobody likes a single person to leave, for then the Lord's feelings will be wounded. It is in this way that intelligence grows; a sense of judgment, the capacity to forbear evolves and a sympathy for all develops unconsciously. Man becomes adjusted and misconceptions disappear. In spite of all the mistakes, temperamental differences and superstitions, each accepts the other as his own and learns to maintain the friendship intact through a brotherly give and take. However, if there is no basic attachment, then each runs away at the first tiny clash."

The young man pondered and finally observed, "This may work out all right, Thakur, within a single denomination. But the problem is that the various churches are convinced that their own particular denomination expresses the intention and interest of Christ better than—or at least as well as—any other group. Perhaps, the root of the problem is whether one's loyalty is primarily to the particular church or to Christ?"

Thakur responded immediately, "I feel the church is the abode of the Lord—the active, inspiring Soul. Hence, to love the Lord and for Him alone to love His abode, is to be blessed with the grace of God that guides to unity. But, to love the Church and for it to love the Lord, is to be baffled with a tiny, flickering grace."

The long silent scholar leaned forward. "Thakur, there are other issues also. Many churches do recognize a primary loyalty to Christ, but the problem comes as to where and how to compromise with another group. . . which sacraments should be kept. . . which should be discarded. . . whose interpretation should be retained; whose authority would prevail and so on. In fact, these problems seem so subtle and so numerous, it many times seems that the possibility of solving them through either the grace of

"Nevertheless," Thakur gently insisted, "I feel that the heart and mind which leans with craving love for the Lord to fulfil His wish and welfare, do unfold an inner far-sightedness flushed with compassion and this does coordinate different interests, converts evil into good and death into life. This, I say again, is the destiny that Providence provides."

"What do you mean by inner far-sightedness?"

"Well, just see: by following the Lord how a coordination and far-sightedness comes! If you have such untottering attachment, then your thought, word, deed, muscle, nerve, blood. . . all are put to work at one place for fulfilling His purpose. Then it becomes easy to play the drum in four directions at one time. Memory becomes sharp. Nothing leaves the mind. Why, even the picture of the person required for some work comes in your mind immediately and how he is to be approached. No opportunity is lost. The intelligence becomes sharp about all men and things in the environment. . . who is required and where. . . how and what can be utilized in which situation. . . what success can be achieved where and by whom, through whose association and what application. All these things play a symphony in your brain. This, I feel, is how a single individual is able to do a million works. Also, such a lover of the Lord is always cautious as far as possible to nurture and fulfil each person according to his instinctive characteristics and requirements. For only in this way can you make another feel you as his own. This is the way an ordinary man finds he can make the impossible possible through ordinary people. Yes, this is the kind of work, the kind of institution, church or movement that can really be called an organization. And its very soul, its blood and bone, is unity—a Lord-centric purpose. In a word, if you are roused to the Lord and actively interested in establishing His interest and inspiring others likewise, well, I say that consolidation of energy, will and purpose is inevitable. But if your own personality is not adjusted, integrated

and fulfilling to the Lord, you won't be able to create adjustment or integration amongst others."

The girl restlessly cleared her throat. "Thakur, there's a point that's even more difficult: What's an ordinary layman supposed to do about all the tortured theological reasoning and hairsplitting of the theologians? It makes people like me give it all up as hopeless."

Thakur shook his head. "Don't be unbalanced or apathetic. Just imbibe your Lord in yourself with eager volition and sympathetic sustenance. Tolerate all who wish to love Him. Thus tune yourself with Him through skilful, inquisitive activity. Always keep Christ untwisted with a thirsty zeal and open-hearted, fulfilling eagerness. Administering yourself and others in this way with a sober manipulation, infuse Him into everyone through your voice, behaviour and service. I know you shall carry all to Him—to One. For this unflinching acceptance which makes you glow with heavenly bloom will draw hellish hearts heavenward with a thundering pull!"

The girl became thoughtful and finally observed, "Thakur, you make it sound so easy, I'm almost ready to be convinced. The trouble is that later on when we're a long way away, the doubts will come back again. How is it possible to keep the conviction that I have here now?"

Thakur smiled. "I think, to be convinced and have conviction are not the same thing. Conviction isn't achieved unless it's built upon one's existence. Understanding is not firm without this conviction. Now you understand, but later some counter considerations come. You can't stand in an inimical environment

logic and intellect burst forth. You may not receive intellectually the subtle implications of some particular way of your Lord, but your faith is immovable. You know that whatever your Lord does is for the greatest benefit of the individual and the collective existence. This faith gives the necessary intelligence and logic at the needed time. But, you must not give latitude to any words, thoughts and deeds that go to slacken faith. Not even in joke. Such sloppy ways, words, deeds and associations do a lot of harm to one unconsciously. You cannot realize the harm until a crisis comes. Perhaps in ordinary times you may be all right, but in the battlefield of pursuing the Lord where you must face tremendous obstacles, dangers, sufferings, pains, self-denials, suppression of desires and passions—there, you may collapse and back out. You cannot hold your head high nor stand firm for your Lord where there are any 'ifs', 'ands' or 'buts' within you."

"Gee, Thakur, such an absolute dedication to Christ is beyond the capacity of ordinary people like me." The girl seemed to slouch a little. "That kind of dedication is for the priests, the padres and those people who have given their all for Christ."

"But, I think," Thakur said steadily, "to rely on others to serve your Lord is an erroneous belief that belittles you and your Lord. What is more, Christ has said, . . . 'ye are to be perfect, even as thy Father is perfect . . .'

Thakur turned to speak with some newly arrived visitors and the Americans conversed quietly amongst themselves.

CHAPTER IV

POPE: PRINCIPAL OR PREJUDICE

When most of the people had drifted away, Thakur looked quizzically at the American visitors who were engaged in earnest argument. His glance prompted the serious, spectacled youth to observe: "Thakur, we're talking about the fact that even if all Protestants united in Christ, still the gulf between the Catholic and Protestant would remain. Particularly, the Catholic feeling of a necessity for the presence of an intermediary between themselves and God. This is completely contradictory to the faith in the 'priesthood of all believers' of the protestants. We feel no necessity to depend upon anyone but God."

Thakur's head shook slightly. "But I think that man's very existence depends upon others. I feel that if there is somebody as thou, and if there is a tension due to the urge to fulfil Him, then our sensitiveness and receptivity increase and from this we grow."

"But, Thakur, can't that 'thou' be God?"

"I fear there is always the danger of being overwhelmed by vanity and passion without some embodied attachment," Thakur explained. "I think that our libido — that innate tendency toward unification — always seeks something to which to attach itself: mother, teacher, Lord. And it is through such an attachment that man grows."

The American girl shook her head. "Still, I can't understand why that can't be the almighty spirit of God."

"But I don't understand God without man," Thakur answered. "Even if He exists, I can't understand what I have to do with Him. When I speak of God, I think of One in Whom the qualities

of Omnipotence, Omnipresence and Omniscience are alive. We think of a kind man when we speak of kindness. Where can kindness exist but in a kind person? And how can we feel it?"

"What's the practical difference to us whether we think of the quality or the man?"

Thakur smiled, "I don't feel there is much life or juice unless there be a living, embodied personality and we have adherence to Him. Then, we achieve wonders for His satisfaction and acquire newer and newer qualities. Why? Because, when our love holds Him supreme in our life, we don't feel sufferings but move on and on for Him. Thus our evolution takes place unconsciously. This is the reason I stress attachment to the Lord. So, let your God be absolute, but don't ignore the material embodiment through whom He evolves to you. Otherwise, it can be vanity."

"What about idols, Thakur? Would you call them embodiments?" The girl's voice seemed almost frightened.

Thakur's eyes twinkled. "I think that man is seldom an idolater, but the remembrance of the beloved Lord is carried through His picture and His image. Since man cannot forego his love and admiration for Him, he likes to bring His remembrance from the immemorial past into the memorable present with devoted obeisance. Is this an offence? Is this a blockade of culture? Love replies: 'No!' Regard and reverence echo: 'Such a man is no idolater, but an Ideal-ater.'"

The youth with dark eyes smiled cynically. "It may be easier to understand qualities this way, Thakur. But generally it's seen that the only utility of idols for many is to furnish a place to put flowers and sprinkle holy water."

Thakur shook his head and said, "But worship does not mean

to merely adore with flowers and sprinkle with holy water. Rather, I feel it means to care for His interest, fulfilment and protection with tactful skill. It means to make oneself sharp and useful through intelligent discernment and service so as to become worthy and able to nurture life and combat evil. To neglect this, I think, is to make the worship impotent, disintegrating to oneself and to the object of one's worship. So I say to you: always make your worship alive with enthusiastic, active earnestness."

"Aside from this so-called idolatry, Thakur," the older woman observed, "a point that is even more upsetting to Protestants is the blind allegiance which Catholics have for their Pope."

Thakur looked at her steadily. "I feel that he who follows freely the Christ in every act, with all his senses is a man with allegiance to Christ. He who demonstrates such allegiance to Christ, I think, is the Pope normally, though he has no greed for it"

"But Thakur . . ." the younger girl's eyes widened, "Thakur, they call him the Holy Father! Don't you think that's going too far?"

Thakur's eyes twinkled. "But, I believe that with all the beating urge of love, such a Pope always speaks of Christ and seldom of himself and through this love for the Lord, he loves all the people and sows all of Christ in them. So, I think that sanctity runs through his whole being and radiates to all. Can he not be called the holy father?"

"But Thakur, they worship the Pope as if he were God!"

"I don't think the Pope can ever be God," Thakur replied, "but such a Pope can administer the love of God."

"Thakur," the girl's voice was plaintive, "after all, don't you

feel the Pope is a fallible human being? Yet they insist their Pope is infallible!"

Thakur's voice was firm. "He may be fallible or infallible. But such a Pope speaks with the mouth of Christ, hears with the ears of Christ and sees with the eyes of Christ. Surely, it is only he who is organized in Christ who can organize many normally."

The ensuing silence was heavy with thought. Finally, the girl said vigorously. "All right, Thakur. But the Protestants believe no man is better than another. If not equal biologically, at least all are equal in Christ. That's why our Churches are democratic!"

"The Church may be democratic in the sense that Christ is and was the interest of all according to traditional distinctiveness," Thakur responded, "All men too, may be equal in Him. But, has any man equalled Christ?"

Before a protest could be made at this equivocation, Thakur pulled a pillow under his arm and leaned intimately toward the group and added, "Why is it that we love Christ? Isn't it because He possesses the divine love that wells up the existence of every being? And this, I think, He has imbibed in all His being because He loves Him, the Supreme Father—the Source of all fathers. Further, since 'church' means 'belonging to the Lord,' it is the abode of Christ. Then, how can His Church be democratic when it is guided by His tidings and not by the votes of the people? What is more, if this were not so, then, I believe, Christ and His tidings will saunter away with a tearful, sorrowing salute. And one who has no Christ, has nothing. Unable to adjust himself, he scatters with passionate feats, living like a vacant vagabond, a lazy worshipper of a useless Godhood."

The following silence was finally broken by a long sigh. The

girl shook her head. "Thakur, if Christ is so vital, why didn't he make us love Him? If God is omnipotent, why did He make it so difficult?"

Thakur smiled and said, "I think that along with man, God created servants or complexes for him. And though He created man, He has no control over men's desires. As He is a self-sufficient entity, so also, He has left all in the same condition. He has given no less endowment to anyone. Man is free to utilize these possessions in any way he chooses. He may move toward Him or he can ignore and disown Him. . . . turn his back on Him and run after his passions and complexes. Then, instead of servants, they become his masters and make him enjoy the world in their fashion. Thus, the more the son of God subjects himself to his servants, the more he moves toward the jaws of death and forgets the source from which he came. This can easily be realized in the world around us. Having been born of the father, the child has the liberty to go against his wishes. But, if in spite of this liberty, he doesn't take advantage of it and instead follows his father with an urge for good, I believe, he profits. . . . often in unexpected ways. Similar is the case with humanity in general. The more we move toward the Source, the more good we acquire. And this I believe: he who ignores the Source, ultimately is deprived of all re-sources."

"Still, Thakur," the girl murmured, "I don't see why when Christ is so all-loving and God so powerful, He gave us the freedom to move against Him. After all, this is the main reason for all our sufferings."

"Love does not and cannot ever grow out of coercion," Thakur immediately answered, "and even if it could, it wouldn't bring any joy. I feel that when man ignores the possibility of an unregulated, passionate move and proceeds of his own accord toward the Lord and God through a willing bondage of love and

with a mastery over his complexes, then this love is enjoyable to both. Only then the thrill of divine purpose can be tasted. Otherwise, like an automaton with no alternative and in a torrent that swamps feeling, if man is dragged to the so-called good it no longer remains good."

"Why?"

"Because," Thakur explained, "the feeling that develops through concentric love, the conflict between good and evil, self-adjustment and the power of placing things properly are absent. These qualities do not grow. Thus, men could not evolve. Enjoyment would not exist. Even more, if this freedom were not present, then firmness of character, will power and personality would not develop. . . ."

" . . . but, Thakur," the girl hardly waited for him to end, "why does Christ ignore us even when we pray to Him?"

Thakur smiled lovingly and said, "Christ said, ' . . . blessed is he who is repelled by nothing in me . . . ' and again, 'he who takes me as a good man gets a good man's reward. . . . ' I feel, Christ is eager to give, but if we don't do for Him, if we don't seek His will, then our receptivity cannot grow. Then, even though He gives, we are unable to receive. It is only by doing His will that the way to receive is opened. See, there are so many lights on in the yard. But, if I close my eyes, will I be able to see the light? At least, we have to open our eyes. However much He may love us, we won't feel it unless we love Him and move to fulfil His will. That is why I feel that when we move against the intention of the Lord—the Principal of our existence—then, we feel He ignores us. But, I tell you: truly, truly, truly, He is always all-loving!"

The girl shook her head. "Yet, however sincerely one tries, it is very difficult to know what His intention is in any particular situation."

"Just love Christ for His sake in your words, deeds and thoughts," Thakur's eyes became radiant, "Just accept all true Prophets as anointed Advents. Serve and follow him who fulfils and follows Christ in every thought, word and deed according to the needs of this age. This will surely inspire you with His intention automatically."

"Oh, Thakur," the elderly woman protested, "does loving Christ for His sake mean that we must love other Prophets, too?" There was a startled look in her eyes. "Don't you feel this is a kind of immoral neutrality, a lack of sincerity to Christ Himself?"

Thakur's head shook slowly. "Be aware," he cautioned, "if in the garb of love for Christ, with a pride of knowledge and a desire to envelop the existential gleam of others with a dusky self-conceit, you ignore or belittle any One of Them, then, I feel you will deprive yourself of Their tidings that can thrive existence. Your love will be partialized, humanity will not gather to practise those tidings. Remember, it is partialized love that pollutes prejudice to the people with every vanity. It turns them away from the tidings that can adjust traits, temperament and culture toward a pious becoming to One. Thus, all mankind is deprived. Then, and then alone it is that you deprive yourself and all the people; for a murky gloom with a fluent flow begins to cover all in vanity."

Thakur leaned toward the visitors and his voice became ardent with appeal: "So I say: Do love Christ for the sake of Christ. Think all true Prophets as Christ and follow and fulfil him in whom Christ lives with meaningful adjustment. This, I believe, is the essence of Christianity for the world!"

"... follow one who fulfils Christ, Thakur. . .?" The young American girl's eyes were puzzled. "Where to find him? How to recognize him?"

Thakur's eyes held the girl's relentlessly as he spoke: "When you find one who speaks of Christ with the pride of faith and becomes restless with pleasure and humility when he speaks of His kindness; who calls and embraces all with His love. . . a love that bursts spontaneously from his every word and deed; who knows no rest unless he be lost in His love—then, I say: know it for sure that Christ lies blazing in him and that love which flows from his heart inspires limitless lives to self-elevation, progress and peace!"

"Thakur," the serious young man said, "she didn't ask when but asked where?"

"Christ has said," Thakur responded immediately, "seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto thee. . ."

The elderly visitor intervened, "Thakur, there's a question that has long disturbed me though it is off the subject. Why, if Christ is omnipotent, didn't He save Himself? Or at least, why didn't his Father?"

A gravity came in Thakur's face. "I only know that His object is always to live and help live. When He has to work on this plane of existence, He must do so through His human form and within the limits of time and space. Even more, I know His will is infallible and He is bound to fulfil His mission and is never unsuccessful in any of His efforts. What seems a failure is used by Him in a way that pushes His purpose of existential love forward. He moves on until His goal is achieved and there is perfect harmony in His desire, the need and the law."

Darkness had descended and from the fields the howling of dogs in the distance seemed to proclaim the advent of man in the darkness.

ON PROPHETS AND PROPHECIES

After their evening meal that day the visitors returned to Thakur in the yard of Boral Bungalow. "Thakur", the elderly man observed after they were seated, "how did you get such an expansive conception of religion? You almost make one feel there is a possibility to overcome the static conceptions that tend to divide rather than unite."

"I feel," Thakur began, "the clue to real religion concentrates in the character and conception of the Love-Lord. It can be realized only through a concentric zeal, love and service to Him, the Universal individual. After all, each Advent, Avatar, Son and Friend of God are the same, though in different embodiments. Their tidings are of the same tune, though in accordance with the age. So, refute none, though you follow One. To do so, I believe, is a curse on the followers and blasphemy to the Prophets."

"Blasphemy, Thakur? You make it sound terrible."

Thakur's eyes became quizzical. "Since Providence provides the Prophets and Prophets profess the law, and further, since the only way to achieve is to follow and fulfil Them, then, is not conflict and animosity with any of Them a blasphemy, a satanic proclivity?"

"You keep insisting all the time that the Prophets are the same," the young woman said. "Perhaps they are. But why in their profession of the law did they so often proclaim contradictory things?"

"Though the Prophets are One," Thakur explained, "two

aspects, divine and discrete, always exist. The divine is eternal, universal and invariable. The discrete varies according to time, place and circumstance. So, specific situations may mould the creed in many forms, yet the law and basic principle of uplift always twinkle in equal radiance."

"What are those laws and principles that are equal in all?"

"I feel, to uphold, nurture and protect existence with an apt resistance to evil are the four attributes of divinity. There, God smiles with every blessed bliss. Further, I believe that love — the nectar of the Omnipotent, dwells in every heart."

"Love, Thakur?" the serious youth intervened. "Right here there's confusion. The theme of the Hebrew Prophets and Mohammed was fear of God's wrath; while the basic principle of Christ's faith is joy in God's love. Don't you find these different and more than just a question of time, place and circumstance?"

Thakur shook his head as he replied. "I feel that fear and hope lead the mind to knowledge. Then, mercy and love lead to achieve. All Prophets made love prominent and a basis for their teaching; for it leads us to achieve and sublimate our souls normally. Thus in the Tidings of the Hebrews it is said: '... Love is the beginning and the end of the Torah. . . ' and Mohammed has said: '... If you love Allah then follow Me and Allah will love you . . . ' So, don't ever slur any Prophet with a delimiting imposition, lest it lure you to be fixed in unhealed fixity."

Unconvinced, the youth insisted, "But the way Christ, Buddha and Krishna emphasized love makes me feel there is certainly a difference in quality if not in content."

"See," Thakur said pointing towards the moon in the eastern sky, "the moon that rises tonight is the same moon that rose

yesterday and will rise tomorrow. After a few days, that half moon will appear to us as a full one. Yet, the full moon we shall see is really the same as the half moon we see now and the same moon that rises every night. It is only from our view that it seems larger or smaller. Practically, it doesn't change its size at all. Every night it's the same moon. So it is with Advents, Prophets and Son of God. Though They are complete in Themselves, yet They show it according to the situation, the time and the place. Remember, He is always unlimited and according to the devotion and the attitude of the followers, a particular aspect appears prominent."

"Thakur, still there is that statement of Christ's: '... none come to the Father but through Me ...' This makes it difficult to accept other Prophets."

Thakur replied, "But 'Christ' means 'the Anointed.' Hence, all real Prophets are Christ since They are anointed with the love of the Supreme Father that dwells in the life-spirit of every being. This is the reason I feel, Christ declared: '... I am before Abraham was ...' as well as '... none come to the Father but through Me' ..."

A thoughtful silence ensued until the young man with spectacles remarked, "Thakur, we were discussing at supertime about the comment of the great contemporary historian, Toynbee, that perhaps a new universal religion might come from Asia, possibly from India ...". The young man paused and his companion intervened, "Thakur, Christ said that as lightning cometh out of the east and shines unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man. Some people say that in this age of nuclear bombs, we now live in an apocalyptic age. Even some remark about the fact that all the great religions predict a saviour to come. The Hindus wait for Kalki Avatar; the Buddhists pray for Maitreya; the Mohammedans for Muntazar; the Christians

look for Jesus' second coming and the Jews still seek for their Messiah."

"... Thakur, what they're trying to ask is that if the Saviour is to come, when will He come?" the young woman insisted. "They want to know what you say."

Thakur's voice grew grave. "I believe it is when ominous tyranny tutored with hellish hoe through pythonic push of desire, reigns with ramming blow; when life grinds and groans with gnaw of despair; when soul rebels and sobs with panting urge; then, I feel, blissful God comes down with His stretching arms."

"God comes down ...? How does He come, Thakur?"

"As I understand," Thakur explained, "the Son of God, the sudden mutation, is invoked by the anguished, concentrated urge of the people. He then is conceived and born as the Prophet. He is, I believe, the miracle in flesh and blood Who shoots from above for the people below."

"Gee, Thakur," the young woman remarked, "there are an awful lot of people all over the world who are weeping and crying and afraid. Do you think He's come already? If He has where has He come?"

"Perhaps," Thakur said softly, "He sits today, gorgeously simple, wisely foolish, normally normal, in some neglected corner of the world and with an atom bomb of love in His hand."

"There're so many neglected corners in the world, Thakur. Isn't there something more that helps to recognize Him?"

"When you see One who fulfils all knowledge in the traditional trail according to time, place and circumstance

with a meaningful synthesis of the divine and discrete in His words and deeds, then you can know that He is not false, not futile. Rather, He is the embodied Fulfiller, the Best, the Superior one. He is the Flood of Love, the Redeemer of Mankind!"

"... fulfils *all* knowledge ... these meaningful syntheses of divine and discrete ... these phrases are as hard to understand as the word God itself."

Thakur explained, "Though He lives in the world as an ordinary man with all the ways of man, he eats, sleeps, loves his parents, wife and children, feels pain and pleasure; yet, His normal, active attachment to the Source, His supreme consciousness, manifests itself in His character in a normal way and guides Him at every moment. This is as natural and automatic to Him as respiration to ordinary men. He is normal in every way: ever unattached, yet all-attracting, the royal road to man's salvation. Further, it is my faith that all the Prophets converge and awaken in Him of the present. Love to Him is love to All in the worship of God. Yes, I say He is the Way, the Truth, the Light of Life!"

Long silence ensued. An attendant informed Thakur it was time for his meal and there seemed little more to be said. They bade him good-night and walked toward the guest house.

CHAPTER VI ON DEVOTION – A PRACTICAL PROCESS

When the American visitors arrived early the following morning and took their seats beside Thakur, his affectionate glance seemed an invitation to continue their non-stop questioning. It was their last meeting before they would leave, and the elder man immediately queried, "Thakur, you explain all the various aspects and problems of life in terms of the Lord and devotion to Him. The problem is that this assumes that ordinary men have the capacity to love the Lord. Christ said that everything boils down to loving the Lord thy God with all one's heart, mind and strength and loving one's neighbour as oneself. And you seem to boil everything down to that too. The trouble is that this is easy to accept well, in our modern world, the urgings of the flesh make us weak, however much the spirit is willing. ..."

Thakur smiled sympathetically and then quietly insisted, "Still I feel the goal of life is to achieve a meaningful coordination between the Lord, the individual and the environment through a revolving, energetic volition. Also, I know there are three habits which inevitably bring this growing coordination."

"What habits, Thakur?"

"First," Thakur began, "is to make a daily, material oblation to our Lord before taking any food. This practice, I believe is to the prime mover of existence and I call it *Istobritty*."

"Secondly, to make a habit of exalting oneself toward the Lord through pious worship. This I call *Jawjon*."

"And finally, to become habituated in exalting others toward Him through pious works. This I call *Jadjon*."

"I believe that these three practices, *Istobritty*, *Jawjon* and

CHAPTER VII

TRADITION: TRUTH OR TRAVESTY

It was early morning and the last of the monsoon rain drummed on the canvas-covered shelter. It gave a feeling of intimacy to the group gathered around Thakur. The soothing sound made the group whisper among themselves as if avoiding to break the silence.

An elderly man swallowed several times as if hesitating to disturb the tranquility. "Last night you spoke of compatibility of tradition in marriage," he remarked hesitantly, "just what do you mean by tradition?"

Thakur looked at the rainy fields for some time and then spoke slowly, "I think the trail of instinct in every clan from the onset of primitive culture that evolves from the conflict for existence can be called tradition."

"But traditions aren't just in families and clans!" One youth in the group protested. "There are social, religious, and political traditions too."

Thakur smiled affectionately. "The root of family life is its tradition and from that all other traditions sprout spontaneously. So, I think it's better not to rely on anyone who strikes at your traditional traits — those nodules of accumulated experience on which your family and country evolve — because it is upon these traits that your existence grows."

"But, Thakur," the young man insisted, "Many times it seems that some traditions suppress existence. Rather than helping our country evolve, many of them seem to suffocate life itself!"

Thakur became thoughtful and after a few moments explained, "To save existence from the trauma of environment and atmosphere, a cautious, skilful attitude evolves into an ingrained instinct and this adjusts intelligence efficiently. That is why, I feel that the root of tradition lies deep in the bosom of nature that comes from the cross-conflict for life and growth. In short, think tradition is that skill or formed habit that has evolved from this conflict." He paused and His eyes gripped the youth. "So, always remember anyone who breaks this or cannot evolve, does not survive. This is the reason, tradition might be called the agent of survival."

The youth shook his head and insisted: "Still it seems that so many of those traditions as practiced today in our country are less an agent for survival and more a superstition that suppresses any kind of evolution!"

Thakur's eyes glowed with sympathy as He quietly insisted: "Still, I believe that tradition is the basis of life, education and society that integrates with a meaningful adjustment the personality of man."

Despite the uncomprising words, there was a spirit of understanding in his manner that seemed to invite the young man to continue. "Still it seems that traditions always keep people living in the past and it is very difficult to find any meaningful adjustment with the present . . . well, instead of integrating one's personality, it just seems to make him more confused."

Thakur shook his head, "Still I say: I believe it is tradition alone that links the past with the present and gradually moulds by jerks the structure of individuals, families and communities with an intelligent, intuitive farsightedness toward a distinctive development and with a necessary resistance to anti-becoming. Further, one who lacks or loses this instinctive trait coming down from primitive fatherhood into the present, finds his inquisitive,

conscientious aptitudes gradually diminishing. This in turn makes one a personality of whimsical, mechanical thoughts and superficial understanding. . . ."

" . . . but, but, Thakur," the young man interrupted, "It's the traditional beliefs that appear to be seeking to destroy intelligence and inquisitiveness! When someone questions the validity of a virgin birth, or suggests the possibility of evolution, the opposition is often rigid and narrow. Isn't this what blocks intelligence?"

There was sympathy in Thakur's eyes. "No doubt, if irrational advent and stubborn prejudice that stammers and hammers the go of life, fetters fulfilment and growth – then it is superstition," he paused and catching the eyes of the youth he asked softly, "but . . . can the disease of my body ever be called my existence?"

The frown on the face of the youth subsided and an elderly woman within the group intervened, "Traditions often seem to create another problem, Thakur. That is the discord and division which develop between groups which follow differing ones. Now, this may be due to disease in tradition as you suggest, but it remains one of the great obstacles and it blocks any real brotherhood. In fact, these differences seem to threaten our very existence."

Thakur looked at the elderly woman as he began, "I think that if a conscious understanding of those traditions that bloom beliefs and customs which uphold existence and maintain the law of behaviour and becoming – if that understanding can resonate through one's dress, habit and diet; then, others will resonate with a follow of fellow-feeling, love and service."

The woman smiled sarcastically, "Well, there is certainly a lack of any of that resonating understanding that creates fellow-feeling . . . and a lot of understanding that destroys fellow-feeling and encourages an arrogant exclusiveness . . ." The youth entered

the talk again, " . . . and practically, it's just because of these kinds of conflicts, that many of us who seek a future with closer understanding with others have discarded all those old traditional beliefs and customs and follow a more promising progressive life."

Thakur continued to smile, but his words came with a deliberate caution: "There is no harm in being modern, but why be disgracefully progressive? It's better to keep within your trail of tradition as an offspring of your ancestors. This will keep a continuing flow of attributes and attitudes in culture that will create a morale in morality along the way of evolving fellow-feeling."

"But aren't modern progress and old traditions mutually exclusive? If one is to be modern he has to discard almost all the old traditions, doesn't he?"

A new gravity came in Thakur's voice. "Again I say, Beware! Do not break the spine of your traditions that goad you toward becoming. Otherwise, the entire structure of society can collapse. Bear in mind: A broken or infected spine cannot systematically erect the system."

"But, Thakur, it is just this spine . . . the so-called exponents tradition and culture – sometimes pious but more often self-righteous and pompous – who I think is the most infected!" Resentment and frustration poured out of the youth's voice. "Few of them link the past with the present intelligently, and even fewer practice the profuse knowledge they preach and push on the rest of us!"

The petulant outburst of the youth aroused a sympathetic smile on Thakur's face. "Cultural practices that maintain existence are existential traditions. But, the culture that has no practice is meaningless: 'I know, but I cannot apply.' The knowledge that

knows, but doesn't know how to apply is what I call a dazzling ignorance."

"So, Thakur," the young man insisted, "today we're living in the light of that 'dazzling ignorance' and so we have to start over and again develop those customs and culture that will maintain life."

Thakur nodded. "When the culture doesn't revere the traditional display of existence, and tradition itself doesn't collaborate with the life and growth of every individual, then the uphill movement of the people becomes distortedly deficient, and this in turn re-awakens the urge for existence and the ensuing conflict makes existential traditions arise again."

Now, an elderly man so long silent protested. "Certainly our customs and beliefs which are our heritage and have come from our forefathers are not all deficient and distorted. Many are still helpful to life. And even though they may vary in different places and conditions, they are not necessarily sources of distrust and dislike and certainly not the only source for resentments and suspicions. As a matter of fact, many of these traditions do help to create understanding even though some don't. The real problem is to know the difference. How to have that perception so we can determine existential traditions?"

Thakur smiled in support. "I think existence itself is the common factor, no matter the country, the climate or the distinctive way of life. It is from cultural exercises that existential traditions evolve and, becoming part of our normal stream of life, help us to determine the steps to our destination — life and growth — through favourable habit and practice. They nurture and invigorate the mental and physical system, balance the senses, increase longevity and, most of all, build a stability in society. So, discern what is favourable to existence, then make your thoughts support with meaningful adjustment this

existential progress. Resist with rational coherence what is harmful to existence; and support with valorous dignity whatever is useful to life. This, I think, is the way to rinse and raise those existential traditions which are profitable to you and your country with a pious, progressive push."

"That sounds nice, Thakur," the youth began, "but to try to discover among the myriads of opinions, facts and fancies that parade in the name of custom and belief those things that will stabilize society and help existence . . . well, it's practically impossible. In fact, trying to choose would only add fuel to the flames of controversy and instability. It might be better to forget all about them and begin again with a newer philosophy like some of the progressive countries have done."

Thakur's voice became grave: "Do what's good for the people, with meaningful rationality, but beware, do not ever disturb the basic fundamentals of these traditions. Though carefully modifying them with a compassionate consideration and an adjustment that is meaningful and actively supportive of existence, can uphold the banner of liberty and freedom." Thakur's demeanour became more grave, and reflected itself in his voice, "Always remember: If you outrage the trail of tradition of your country with a blend of blind conception and whimsical venture it can pulverize the cultural core and drown the being in the stupor of self-betrayal, individually and collectively. That ignorance of a wise ego will make your people foolish — a glaring abortion of mournful nature!"

The foreboding in his words and his gravity combined with the drumming of the rain on the roof to create a long, almost ominous silence. It was broken by the youthful protestor. His voice was hesitant and touched with an heretofore missing humility, "Thakur, I still don't understand how we can adjust or change any customs and traditions unless we change some of the basic or fundamental ones that are outdated and obviously obstructing

...to something? We can't just sit and pretend we believe when we don't."

Thakur was ready. "I think it's only a minute top-to-bottom, adjusted, supervising survey of thousands of experiences of thousands of men that make one capable of adjusting and applying changes which will blossom existential traditions." He paused and His eyes gripped those of the youth. "So, don't walk away from the old, until you have a more fulfilling one that will practically bring all-round, stable becoming with a proper explanation of the old." Thakur's hand went up in caution: "But beware: To advocate the new without an understanding explanation of the profound that is embedded in the old only opens the doorway to decadence and disintegration and brings demoralization that makes sufferings swell in a foaming fury!"

"But the need is urgent! Where are such perceptively practical people, with such a depth of understanding of the past and ability to properly link it with the present?"

Thakur smiled. "The existential, serviceable personality who wells up the people's approval of life is the characteristic of a prophet. So I feel the Prophet is the source and seed of existential traditions."

"Why prophet, Thakur?"

"Because, the Prophet professes and practices those laws that uphold life and goads man to follow them."

Protest was immediate. "That's the trouble! Prophets are the seeds of different traditions and that's what starts all the trouble!"

Thakur's smile remained as he explained: "I understand, that Prophets are the same messengers of Providence; they are similar according to the age. They come in the role of reformers; the

materialized embodiment of the existential principles for the age. So, if one follows the Prophet in order to fulfil, protect and nurture Him, that person will normally realize practically the shape of existential traditions. He'll be able to discern the varied aspects of life and growth. He spontaneously resists the evil that brings deterioration from the Prophet. In a word, He is a surrendered follower who flares the fellow-feeling to follow one."

"That's nice, Thakur, but generally the followers create much more jealousy, bitterness and disintegration than all the good the Prophet may bring."

Thakur nodded in agreement. "When passionate craving perverts the urge to follow and fulfil the Prophet, then discord is fertilized and superstition is supported, for such a follower uses the Prophet to fulfil his passion."

"Still, it's more than that, Thakur," a middle-aged woman insisted. "Many sincere followers are taught things which ultimately become traditions and are so exclusive they become the source of discord. For example, in Christianity, there is the tradition of the cross which doesn't exist in other religions. In Islam, their fanatic and traditionally narrow belief that Mohammed is the last Prophet and those who fail to recognize this are infidels is a tradition that has created as much bloodshed and discord as anything in history!"

Thakur shook his head in denial. "The cross is the sign of traditional skill to slay and is given in the struggle for existence. I think that is why Christ has said, 'Take up the cross and follow me.' He paused and then continued, 'And Hazrat Mohammed has said, 'He who sheds a drop of the blood of anyone sheds my blood,' and further he has said, 'To slander any Prophet is to slander Allah and he who does so is an infidel.'" His voice became grave, "So I say to you: Never wink with arch-vulgarity at any Prophet that is past. For know for sure, the heart of the Son of

Man — Providence Materialised — will bleed in sorrow for that twisted wink and arch-vulgarity. So it is a shameful crime, just as you would feel for your revered One." And now in an exalted appeal he continued, "Will you not try to adjust yourself and so become fit for your Lord Beloved for His sake?"

The group had grown silent and now Thakur's voice became almost a prayer: "Oh, bow to Him whose hands are for service and footsteps to lead; whose eyes have seen the way of life. His voice displays artistically; whose mind and brain are to adjust the Providential wisdom. His heart of love unfolds; whose nail is to resist the evil that drags to discord and death. Oh, truly He is the anointed, the Christ." His eyes seemed to fill with love and his voice appealed to the youth: "Can't you bow down and embrace Him? Truly, your yoke will be easy, your burden will be light. This is surely the loving message of your Anointed Lord!"

A long silence ensued. The group whispered amongst themselves. Then finally the middle-aged woman asked, "But Thakur, is not just such an uncalculated, fanatic devotion the reason why each religious group tries to convert the others? And it is this exclusiveness and insistence on converting others that leads to so much resentment?"

"Conversion, I think always diverts from the traditional trail with a twisting denial of former advents and a short-sighted, passionate vanity. But Convergence to the One source of Providential flow brings an inter-interested unity to all. And this unity maintains an inter-unison of the Prophets according to the Age. Through this progressive perception of existence, the common factor in tradition is cleaned. Then, the flow of fellow-feeling from man to man brings a new dawn from the darkening difference. So I say: Be a fanatic with a balanced, judicious tolerance to the Divine Man, the Mosque, the Church or Temple with a fascinating, thriving adherence to the common ordinance. Thus avoid being unjust to your religious conception."

"This sounds nice, Thakur, but leaving out different religions, the problem created by differing conceptions and traditions in Christianity have defied solution. The Christian religious wars, motivated by their own exclusive idea of Christ and refusal to tolerate anything else ultimately laid waste to Europe and the tragedy was that there were men on both sides who believed they were fighting sincerely for Christ."

Thakur nodded slightly and then in a voice that seemed to wash away all doubts, he said, "I think that 'Christ' means 'the anointed' so I can't understand how they could have been anointed with love for Christ, for when did He kill a single man or beast?" His face seemed to radiate with power. "Yet I say again and again: You can be anointed with love for Christ, even as Christ was anointed with love for the Supreme Father. And when this happens, then custom, tradition and characteristics adjust accordingly. Such an adjustment will never create wars, revolutions or rebellions. Rather, it unlooses a flood of feeling that exalts existence, flourishes the urge for life, unfolds intelligence and enlivens the morale of morality in everyone. Surely, this is the stay and stand of everyone in every family, community and country!"

The clouds that hung so low parted and allowed rays of the morning sun to come into the shelter as Thakur's appeal seemed to become more insistent: "Can't you try to bring a stable change in tradition, custom and contrivances of culture and then uphold your civilization? Won't you be wisely rational, tolerably conservative with a balanced foresight — mentally and physically — in accordance with your family traditions and socio-national traits? Only this will protect you and push forward your existential flow. And what is more, you will find that a smiling Providence will make you resonate with a lore of love and so be blessed to survive!"

The birds had begun to sing and the group slowly arose to go to the dining room.